

## Self-care Corner

**S**elf-care defines a patient's interest and ability to participate in his or her own treatment. For people on dialysis there is tremendous benefit in partnering with care providers to achieve a comfortable level of self-care. Health care providers also benefit because they are dealing with patients who are generally healthier and have a more positive outlook.

In the April 2002 issue of the IM we provided a list of topics to be discussed with patients in an effort to engage their partnership and encourage self-care. These topics provide a good starting point, but dialysis professionals should continue this effort by asking themselves the following questions:

- Do you provide any printed educational materials (e.g., books, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters) for patients?
- Do you have a special orientation program for new patients?
- Do you have educational programs for patients' families or other social support persons?
- Do you sponsor educational programs for members of the healthcare team?
- Do you have any facility-specific educational materials?
- Do you have/provide any educational videos for patient use?
- Do you provide or have any other kinds of educational strategies/programs that were not covered in the above items?



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**D**epression robs people of the ability to function normally. For patients of any kind, this means automatic, unwanted, yet self-imposed limits on the amount of personal resources they can apply toward their own care. And, when all is said and done, aren't we striving to maximize resources that help people to achieve optimal treatment goals?

Depression may limit ESRD patients' abilities to make and/or carry out sound decisions regarding their daily care. A patient who is feeling sad, worthless, or hopeless; one who has lost interest in formerly meaningful activities (hallmarks of depression), is at higher risk for noncompliance: ignoring treatment restrictions (including dietary and fluid intake), skipping medications, or shortening/skipping treatments altogether. We now know that depression in ESRD

patients correlates with higher morbidity, hospitalization, and mortality rates.

What can you do?

- Educate your staff and patients about the prevalence of depression.
- Assess all patients for depression risks.
- Treat depression as a treatable disease.
- Prescribe, counsel, and/or refer patients for help.

For more specifics, please refer to the Network #15 "Depression Resource Portfolio," sent to all facilities (social workers) in January 2003. Contained in the portfolio is material on: (1) Educational information for patients and families; (2) Educational information on depression for facility staff; and (3) Depression screening information and tools.

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